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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 001580

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: GEORGIA: MOIA FOLLOWS THROUGH, NON-PARLIAMENTARY
OPPOSITION CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC

REF: A. TBILISI 1551

[B](#). TBILISI 1097

[C](#). TBILISI 1056

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d).

[1](#). (SBU) Summary: As a result of the August 12 meeting between opposition leaders and the MoIA (ref A), a dozen detainees have been released on bond. The MoIA continues to review the 44 cases that Irakli Alasania (Our Georgia - Free Democrats) provided during the meeting as well as other cases that were provided by the Christian Democrats and other parties. Another meeting between the opposition and MoIA is being discussed with details still to be finalized. Meanwhile, both sides have stated their willingness to continue engagement. End Summary.

[2](#). (C) Comment: The fact that opposition leaders are publicly (although some grudgingly) giving the GoG credit for constructive engagement and concrete results is a small but important step toward building mutual trust and further political dialogue. So far, both sides appear to be approaching the discussions in good faith and speaking to each other regularly, usually daily. However, thus far, government officials note that they are not willing to look at cases raised by opposition leaders who are not willing to sit down and engage in direct discussions. In addition to the Ambassador's urging to MoIA Minister Merabishvili, poloffs continue to meet regularly with MoIA officials to discuss alleged violence and arrests based on political activity (ref C). MoIA has been extremely responsive to Post's repeated inquiries. Former EUR DAS Bryza also raised this issue with President Saakashvili and urged continued engagement with the opposition. Post will continue to encourage all sides to continue good faith, constructive dialogue in this forum and others. End Comment.

Concrete Results Follow Meeting - Opposition Acknowledges GoG Steps

[3](#). (U) Zurab Abashidze (Our Georgia - Free Democrats), who himself was beaten by police on June 15 at the Dighomi police station (ref B), called the process of talking to the authorities successful and noted to critics that "releasing people from jails is a complicated process and it will not happen in a day." Abashidze said there might be another meeting with law enforcement ministers. Daid Usupashvili (Republicans) was less happy with the release on bail of two of his supporters calling it "a small human step from the authorities." A representative of the New Rights party sent a blast email out thanking diplomats and others for their engagement on the issue specifically in the case of Edisher Jobava, who was also released on bail.

[4](#). (C) Privately, Irakli Alasania told the DCM that he was pleased with the results following the August 12 meeting. Alasania stressed the need for continued constructive engagement but thought the release of 12 detainees was a

positive and concrete step. (Embassy Note: Neither the MoIA or opposition leaders could give an exact number of those who were released on bond -- but generally believe the number is about 12. End Note.) Alasania was also pleased with the establishment of a "hotline" so opposition members could get in touch with a senior MoIA official to discuss arrests in real time. Alasania told the DCM that Head of the MoIA's analytical unit Shota Utiashvili was impressive and a "good guy". On August 20, Utiashvili told Poloff that he had been in contact with Alasania almost daily. Utiashvili said a Qin contact with Alasania almost daily. Utiashvili said a number of the cases were still under review and more detainees would possibly be released on bail. Utiashvili added that MoIA would not provide a written response to Alasania's document, but was prepared to meet with the opposition to discuss the current cases or any other cases on which the opposition had questions. Utiashvili told Poloff he had been discussing another meeting with Alasania.

A Successful Hotline Example?

15. (C) While Usupashvili told Poloff that although he was disappointed in the MoIA's response (only 2 of 9 Republicans on the list have been freed on bail), he admitted that a little progress was better than none. Usupashvili said in the last two days, police searched a number of his activists houses in Signaghi without warrants. Usupashvili called Utiashvili to report this -- and Utiashvili called back within 30 minutes and apologized, and confirmed that no charges had been or would be filed. Usupashvili cited the example as evidence the MoIA had not changed its ways in any significant fashion, but agreed that Utiashvili had been responsive and helpful. Likewise, Utiashvili told Poloff

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that despite Usupashvili's public rhetoric, he has been quite constructive in private. Utiashvili reiterated to Poloff that the MoIA could not/would not respond to certain opposition leaders public ultimatums but the door remained open to any opposition leaders who wanted to sit down and discuss specific cases of arrests or use the hotline.
TEFFT